Public Opinion and Voting Behavior (Spring 2007)

Chinese Title：民意與投票行為研究 (952)  
Instructor: Frank Cheng-shan Liu  
Office: 社4041  
Office Hours：W 1-3pm or by appointment  
Class Time: M 1:10 ~ 4:00pm  
Phone Number：07-5252000 ext. 5555  
Classroom：社3008  
E-mail：csliu@mail.nsysu.edu.tw

Course Description

The keyword of this class is RESEARCH. A good research requires a solid understanding of the classic works and a good skill of conducting literature review. This course is designed to help students who are interested in micro-level politics to build up these abilities. It will not, however, cover comprehensively all topics about opinion and voting behavior; instead, it will focus on the classical theories about voters. As a theory- and research-oriented class, it highlights common characters of voters in general. (Students who are interested in cross-regional comparison about voting behavior may take other courses, such as Political Communication, or Theories of Comparative Politics). Some research works about Taiwanese voters will be provided, but note that most pieces of research are based on American context and findings by American political scientists. Students are required to read carefully the classics (books that have been cited or heavily discussed over the past two to four decades) and are encouraged to express their disagreement about these theories. The topics addressed in this class include belief system, the formation of voter preferences, party identification, and social network effects. Students are expected to be well prepared for in-class based on the given reading materials and to write two papers related to these subjects.

Course Texts and Readings

The course requires a few books and a pack of journal articles. The content and required readings are subject to change during the semester.

Grading Policy

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Essay</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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- **Class participation (20%)**: involvement in class discussion will reflect your preparation for the class. Credits are given based on your attendance, raising questions, responding to questions, and leading discussion. Assigned readings should be completed before the class.

- **Review Essay (30%)**: You should choose a topic for your term paper (topics related to the subjects listed below or any other topic related to the class) and compose a literature review. The review should be based on 5 to 10 journal articles or books related to the assign books. Newspaper, magazine, and online materials do not count.

- **Research paper and oral presentation (40%, 10%)**: Your research paper should be a semester-long project and the topic you choose must be related to one of the subjects listed in this syllabus. You will need
my consent if you want to write something beyond the scope of this class. You can extend your mid-
term review essay into a term paper, but there is no need to ask for a topic change if you want to start
over. Your research paper should be about 15 pages (double-spaced) in English, or 10,000 words or 25
pages in Chinese. You should cite at least 5 journal articles (published in these 5 years). Use the APA
style to format your paper.

• Note that I do not give “I” for incomplete works. Make sure you turn in the papers before the dead-
lines. The cover page of papers should include the following information: class name, author’s full
name and student id, paper type (mid-term paper or final term paper), turn-in date, and contact infor-

Weekly Schedule

Part I: Opinion Formation and Party Identification

1. [March 7] Introduction to the Class

   • In Class: a discussion about the requirement of the class, the purpose of empirical research, and the
     importance and the role of theory development in academic enterprise.

2. [March 14] Selective Perception

   • Before Class:
       (esp. Chapters 2, 3, and 4).

     • Supplemental:
       – Beck, P.A. (2002). Encouraging political defection: The role of personal discussion networks in
         partisan desertions to the opposition party and Perot votes in 1992. Political Behavior, 24 (4),
         309-337.

   • In Class: also talk about how to do literature review and how to use SSCI and JabRef to manage your
     references.

3. [March 21] Belief Systems

   • Before Class:

     • Supplemental:
         and Attitude Change. Mutz, D. C.; Sniderman, P. M. & Brody, R. A.(Eds.) 195-224. Ann Arbor,
         MI: University of Michigan Press.

4. [March 28] The Origin of Voter Preferences

   • Before Class:
       Press. Read the whole book.
   - Before Class:
   - Supplemental:

6. [April 11] No Class
   - Note: April 11 is a campus-wide day off; start to work on your mid-term paper.

7. [April 18] The Independent
   - Before Class:
   - I will be attending the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Annual Conference in Chicago. The class will be rescheduled.

Part II: Other People’s Influence

8. [April 25] Revisit the Columbia School
   - Before Class:
   - Supplemental:
   - In Class: Turn in your mid-term paper before class starts.

9. [May 2] Communication Networks
   - Before Class:
   - Supplemental:


10. [May 9] Opinion Leaders

• Before Class:

• Supplemental:

Part III: Voting Behavior & Survey Issues


• Before Class:

• Supplemental:

• Note: I am attending the International Communication Association (ICA) conference in the week of May 23; the class of that week may be rescheduled.

14. [June 6] Survey Research and Its Limits

• Before Class:
• Supplemental:

15. [June 13] A Controversy about Survey and Polling

  • Before Class:

  • In Class: A debate about the Fishkin’s work

16. & 17. [June 20 & 27] Concluding Remarks & Student Oral Presentation

  • In Class: paper due in class (June 27)